

Message Text

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PAGE 01 REYKJA 00927 171926Z
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0927

STATE ALSO FOR INR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CSCE, SHUM, UR, IC
SUBJECT: BILATERAL APPROACHES ON SOVIET TRIALS

REF: A. STATE 179532; B. STATE 178559

1. I CALLED ON MFA PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY HENRIK BJORNSSON
HIS AFTERNOON AND USED TALKING POINTS CONTAINED IN REFTEL A
TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERNS OVER SOVIET DISREGARD OF HELSINKI
FINAL ACT PROVISIONS RE HUMAN RIGHTS AND OUR HOPE OTHER
SIGNATORY STATES WILL CONVEY THEIR OWN VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT
TO SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

2. BJORNSSON, WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN BELGRADE CONFERENCE,
EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CONCERNS. HE THEN REFERRED
TO STATEMENTS RE SOVIET TRIALS OF DISSIDENTS WHICH HAD BEEN
MADE BY PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON AND FOREIGN MINISTER
AGUSTSSON OVER PAST WEEKEND (SEEL BELOW).
BJORNSSON WENT ON TO NOTE THAT PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS
TRANSITIONAL IN CHARACTER (OWING TO RECENT NATIONAL
ELECTIONS) AND THAT IT IS THEREFORE RARE FOR SUBSTANTIVE
STATEMENTS OF POLICY TO BE MADE BY CABINET MINISTER
IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. FACT SUCH STATEMENTS WERE MADE
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INDICATES HIGH IMPORTANCE GOI ATTACHES TO SUBJECT, AND HE
WAS CERTAIN SOVIET EMBASSY HERE HAD REPORTED THEM TO
MOSCOW. I TOLD BJORNSSON THAT WE WERE GRATIFIED BY FORTHRIGHT
STAND EXPRESSED BY GOI AT SUCH HIGH LEVELS AND THAT WE WOULD BE
INFORMING WASHINGTON. WE WOULD ALSO REMAIN INTERESTED IN ANY
FURTHER VIEWS OR COMMENTS GOI MIGHT HAVE ON THIS SUBJECT IN
CONTEXT OF CSCE.

3. FOLLOWING ARE STATEMENTS BY PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON AND FOREIGN MINISTER AGUSTSSON:

(A) STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER:

QUOTE TRIALS LIKE THESE SHOW HOW JUSTICE IS IN REALITY IN THE SOVIET UNION. IT IS A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THAT IT SEEMS NOT TO HAVE CHANGED MUCH FOR THE BETTER SINCE THE SOVIET UNION SIGNED THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF OPINION ARE TRAMPLED UPON AND THE SANCTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT VALUED. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT ACCOMPANIES THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM WHERE SOCIALISM RULES, LOSS OF FREEDOM FOLLOWS IN ITS WAKE. THERE TRIALS THERE IN THE EST FORCE PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT THEIR OWN FREEDOM, BUT THEY ALSO ENCOURAGE US TO SEEK ALL MEANS TO STRENGTHEN THOSE WHO NOW SUFFER. STRONG PUBLIC OPINION THROUGHOUT THE WORK AGAINST SUCH RESTRICTIONS OF FREEDOM CERTAINLY HELPS. END QUOTE.

(B) STATE BY FOREIGN MINISTER:

QUOTE: ACCORDING TO THE NEWS THIS IS A BREACH OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE WORST KIND. THE MEN ARE ACCUSED OF CRITICIZING THE SOCIETY. IF SUCH RULES WERE IN EFFECT IN OUR COUNTRY AT LEAST EVERY OTHER ICELANDER WOULD BE AT HARD LABOR. I REGRET THAT THE RUSSIANS USE SUCH METHODS. ICELANDERS ARE EVERYWHERE SUPPORTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS WE HAVE SHOWN MANY TIMES IN THE PAST YEARS AND DECADES. WE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS. WHETHER CONFIDENTIAL

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WE CAN CHANGE MATTERS (SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS), I CANNOT SAY, BUT I'M AFRAID THAT OUR PROTESTS ALONE WOULD BE WORTH LITTLE. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE MAIN THING IS TO WORK HARDER ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THAT CONNECTION I HAVE HIGH HOPES REGARDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE IN MADRID IN 1979.

4. BENEDIKT GRONDAL, CHAIRMAN OF OPPOSITION SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WHO IS CURRENTLY UNDER MANDATE FROM ICELANDIC PRESIDENT TO TRY TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT RESPONDED TO PRESS QUESTION ON SOVIET TRIALS AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HAS PLACED FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL ABOVE ALL. THIS HAS DEVELOPED OVER DECADES AND OUR INTEREST (IN HUMAN RIGHTS) STILL REMAINS THE SAME. I WANT TO EXPRESS MY ADMIRATION FOR THE COURAGE OF THE DISSIDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION AND MY STRONG ANTIPATHY FOR THE AUTHORITIES IN THE EAST AND THE WAY IN WHICH THEY TREAT (DISSIDENTS). IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM CANNOT TAKE FREE THOUGHT OR CRITICISM AND HAS NO ANSWER BUT THROUGH FORCE. I THEREFORE JOIN IN WITH VOICES ALL OVER THE

WORLD THAT CONDEMN THESE TRIALS. I THIN WE IN ICELAND
SHOULD FOLLOW THESE MATTERS CLOSELY AND LEARN FROM THE. WE
SHOULD EXPRESS OUR OPINIONS AND PARTICIPATE IN ANY
ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK AGAINST SUCH TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS,
SUCH AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. THAT WAY OUR VOICE WOULD BE BEST
HEARD. END QUOTE.
BLAKE

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